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G. GORDON CAMPBELL, B.Sc., M.D.,

Lecturer in Clinical Medicine, McGill University ; Assistant Physician to the Montreal General Hospital.

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As cases of this condition are always of interest and especially on account of the wonderful results following thyroid treatment, I have thought that a report of the following instance, which had a fairly characteristic group of symptoms and has improved rapidly under the specific treatment, would be worth publishing.

The patient was first seen by me in May, 1898, and gave the following history:—

A. M., female, aged five years, was born on June 8th, 1893. The labour was prolonged and required the assistance of forceps to accomplish delivery, but was otherwise normal. Nothing special was noticed about the child at birth. The parents were living at the time in Chicago, but removed to Dayton, Ohio, six months later. Here she was taken to see a physician on account of the thickness of her tongue, and under the impression that the large tongue might be due to "tongue-tie" the frenum was cut. When the child was three years old the family moved again to Buffalo, New York, and as she did not appear to be developing properly and did not try to talk, another physician was consulted, who stated that he did not understand the condition, but suggested sending her to a hospital for the eye, ear, and throat, as there might be something gained by an examination of the throat. This was accordingly done, and at this hospital the parents were informed that post-nasal adenoids were the cause of her want of development and their removal recommended. The parents, however, would not consent to an operation, although the diagnosis was confirmed by a second physician. The family then moved to Montreal.

Early in May, 1898, I was asked by Dr. F. J. Shepherd to see a case to which he had been called but was unable to go, and on speaking to him about it the next day, he told me that he, while passing in his carriage, had seen a cretin being wheeled up and down in front of the house in a baby carriage. I promised if I got the opportunity to make enquiries about it, and some weeks later had occasion to see the father. On asking him about the child he gave the history already related, but was not very anxious to have me see the case, having come to the

* Read before the Annual Meeting of the Nova Scotia Medical Society, July 8th, 1899.

conclusion that nothing could be done for his child. However, on showing him some illustrations of sporadic cretinism with the marked improvement produced by treatment by thyroids, I gained his consent to my seeing his child.

As will be seen from the accompanying plate of a photograph taken shortly after this and before treatment was begun, examination showed a girl of considerably under the average height for her age, with a short, thick body, large head, and limbs rather large in proportion to the trunk. The face was round and fat, the eye-lids thick and palpebral aperture narrow, the nose wide and flattened, and the lips thick and prominent with the large tongue most of the time protruding between them. Her head was fairly well covered with rather fine hair, which was, however, dry, lustreless and difficult to keep in place. The abdomen was large and prominent and there was a small umbilical hernia. The skin, though dry, could not properly be classed as xeroderma. The child's expression was the characteristic, dull, stolid, stare of cretinism. She showed little, if any, signs of mental development, being unable to express her wants or to speak, except for two sounds which the parents interpreted as "ma" and "pa." She seemed, however, to understand in a measure what was said to her. She would sit all day without crying or laughing or attempting to enter into the play of her brothers and sisters, but at other times was extremely nervous and irritable and easily frightened by strangers. She was still wearing a napkin and required constant care and attention.

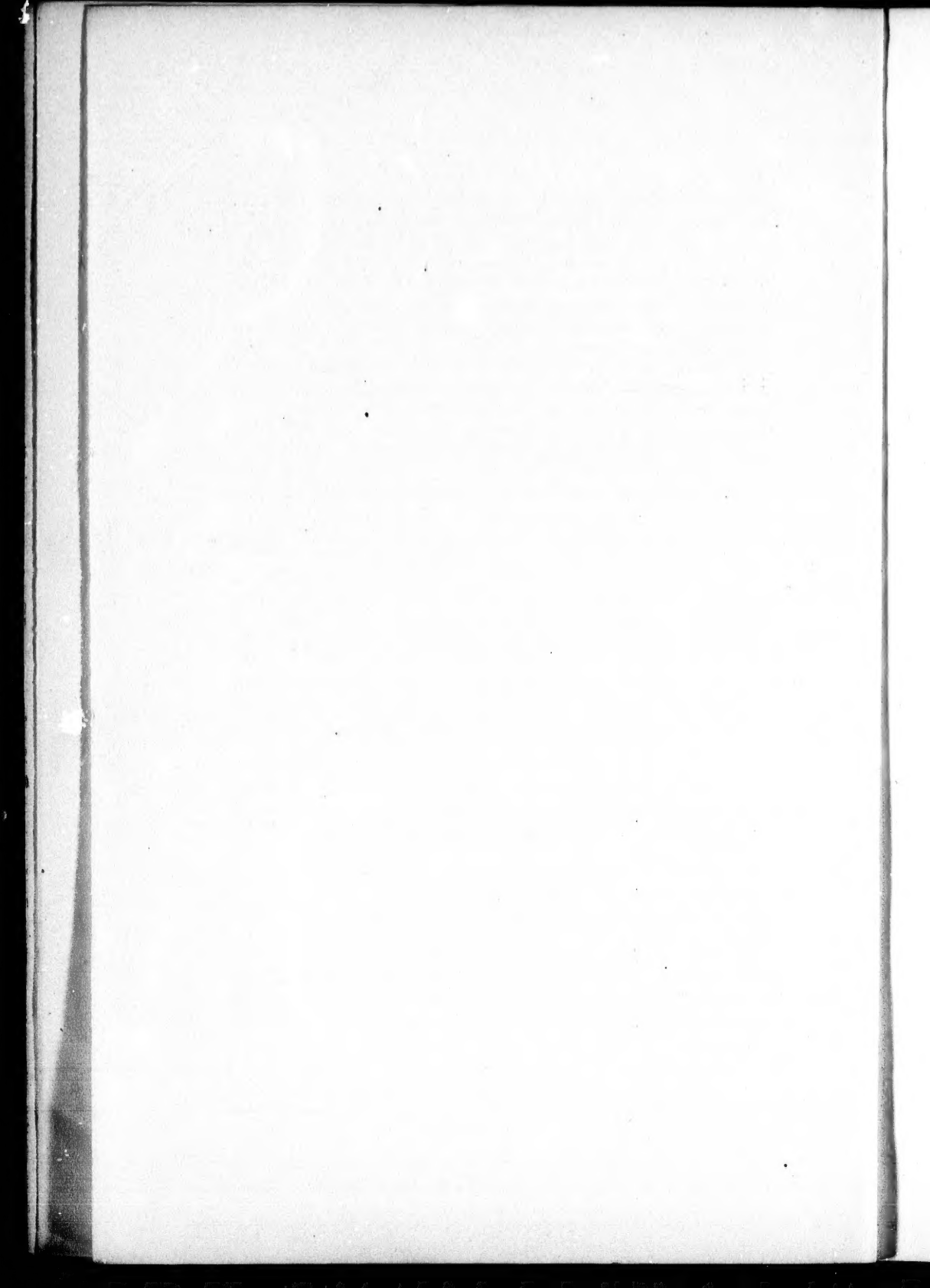
In the *family history* there is nothing of interest. The patient is the fifth of a family of seven, both older and younger children being of average development. When first seen, a younger sister, although there is almost three years difference in their ages, was taller and brighter than the patient.

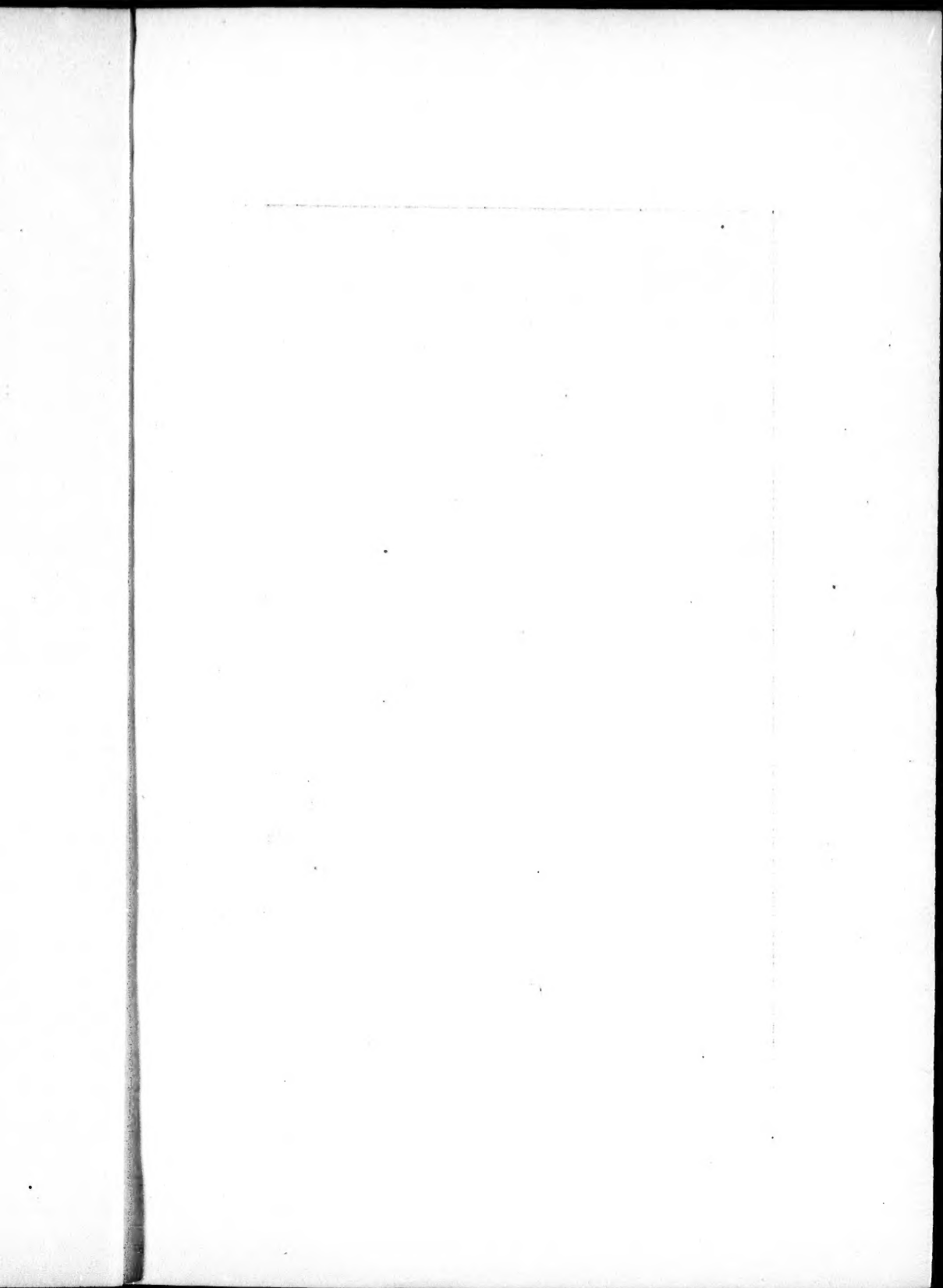
Treatment was commenced on May 17th, 1898, two grains of Armour's dessicated thyroids being given three times a day to begin with. This, however, proved to be more than she could bear, as she developed the condition described as acute thyroidism, and the dose was diminished to two grains twice a day and finally to two grains once a day, which she has continued to take ever since. Improvement at first was slow, the earliest indication that the thyroid was having any effect upon her condition being in the rapid loss of flesh and falling out of the hair. Her health also appeared to fail. It was soon seen, however, that the expression of her face was changing and the improvement in both mental and bodily condition has been going on continuously ever since.

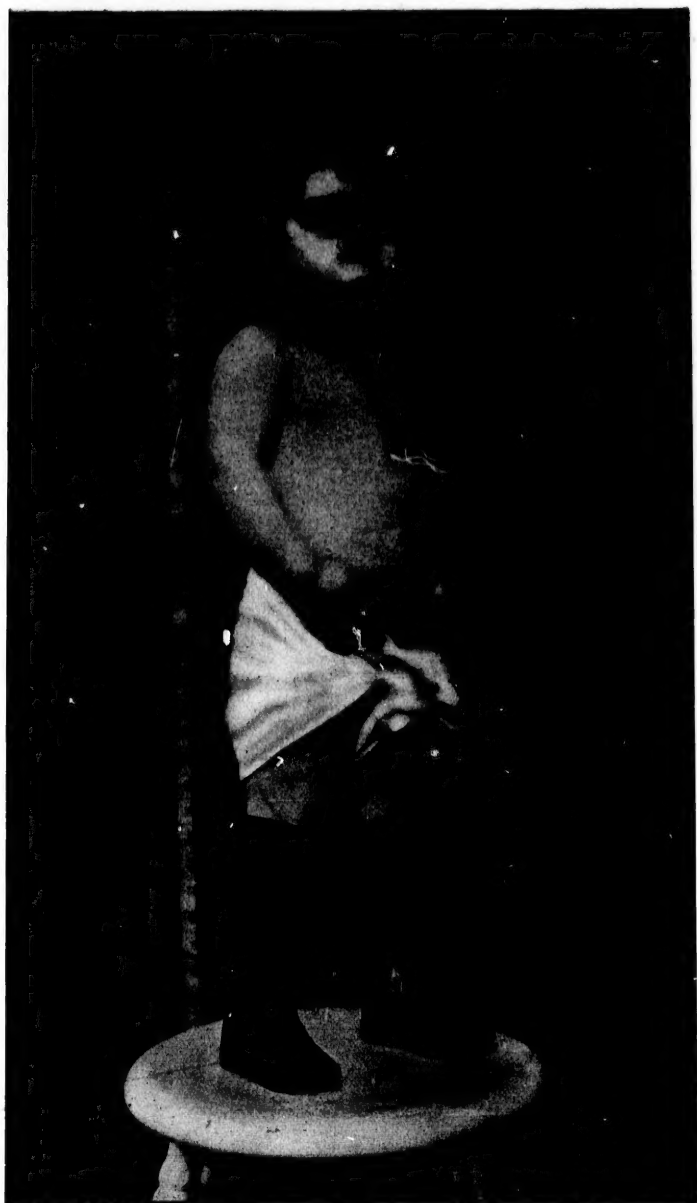
Her present condition, as compared with that of a year ago, is well shown in the second plate of a photograph taken in June, 1899, thirteen months after the first one. Her height, which was 34 inches, has

increased to 38, her expression has entirely changed until now she is an intelligent child, looking perhaps four or five rather than six years of age. The improvement in respect to her mental condition is in no way better shown than by comparison with the younger sister, who is now some two inches shorter, and although one year ago vastly her superior in mental development, is now barely her equal, if not her inferior. The cretin is now a bright vivacious child, taking an interest in and talking about everything around her, does not require more than ordinary attention, has given up wearing napkins and attends to her own wants in that respect, and assists in the care of her two younger sisters. She has also lost the most of her timidity. Physically, besides the gain in height, the thickness of the lips, nose, eye-lids and tongue have entirely disappeared, and, although she does not yet look quite right, one would never suppose that she was a cretin. The prominence of the abdomen and the umbilical hernia have also disappeared and the disproportion between the limbs and body is not noticeable. She has lost almost all of her subcutaneous fat, and the new growth of hair is fine, silky, and easily kept in place.

The interesting points about this case are the vast improvement produced by a year's treatment, the small dose of thyroid required, and the fact that the condition was so long unrecognized. With regard to the degree of benefit received from this form of treatment, reports of cases tend to show that it is greater the earlier in life it is instituted after the condition has developed and also the younger the age of the child. Although there have been a few brilliant results from the treatment of cretins who have reached adult life, in the majority of cases it is far from being as satisfactory as in the case reported. The history of the case previous to coming to Montreal shows that, although these cases cannot be mistaken by any one who has ever had the advantage of seeing a well-marked type, there is nothing in any one of the symptoms or appearances taken separately that would give a clue to the diagnosis, at least in early childhood. Backward children are by no means uncommon, and the condition which is the cause of their want of development may not be recognized until they reach the age of three or even five years. In cretinism the characteristics of course become more marked as the child grows older and fails to develop. In three cases of this condition which I have had under my care, the youngest was three years of age, and, although on taking the appearances and symptoms as a whole, the condition was very suggestive and was looked upon as sporadic cretinism, the diagnosis was not absolute until thyroid treatment had proved its correctness.







SPORADIC CRETINISM.—A. M., aged 5 years, height 34 inches.
Photographed May, 1898.



SPORADIC CRETINISM. —After one year's treatment. Height, 38 inches.
Photographed June, 1890.